

HEART OF UNDERSTANDING



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Table of Contents

- 1 + 1
- Get Understanding
- Hear the Parables
- Have Ye Understood All These Things?

Scriptures Cited:

Proverbs 11:30, Genesis 4:1, 1 Kings 3:5-14, 1 Kings 4:29, Job 38:36, Matthew 13:1-24, Matthew 13:31, Matthew 13:33, Matthew 13:44, Matthew 13:47, Matthew 13:51, John 12:37-40, Isaiah 53, Luke 24:13-25, Matthew 5:22, Luke 24:26-53

Before we begin this lesson, I first want to express my gratitude in being able to present these lessons; it really is a joy to share with you the things that the Lord has shared with me.

As you know, we have been working in the theme of "The Fear of the Lord" which according to scripture, is the beginning of knowledge and of wisdom. We began with "[Fear of the Lord Pt. 1](#)", which was an introduction for this group of lessons. Then we focused on the topic of Knowledge in "[Knowledge is Key](#)", where we saw the importance of knowing God and His will. We then studied wisdom in the Bible and found a consistent pattern, which is that "[Wisdom builds](#)." We ended that lesson by highlighting the wisdom that builds the church and adds to the Lord's body.

And I actually wanted to look at one more scripture to add to that lesson. In Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 30, it reads:

Proverbs 11:30

³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

So, there it is in that one little proverb or one simple saying: a wise person 'wins souls' - wisdom wins souls. Another way of looking at what it is to 'win souls' is to 'build the house of God'. So, we see it in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well, that wisdom builds. Just like Jesus said, *the wise man builds* his house on a rock.

1 + 1

Now that we have already gone through lessons about knowledge and wisdom, we are going to focus on "understanding". And there is a lot found in the scriptures about this principle. We will start by looking at the original Greek to help us define "understanding". Most times in the New Testament when we see the word "understanding" used, it is actually the word σύνεσις or "*synesis*" in the original Greek. We see that prefix of 'syn' in words such as synthesis, synchronize, and synonym.

Most words that begin with the prefix "syn" in some way denote two things being related or **coming together**. For example, when we say that something is *synchronized*, what we mean is that two things are together (syn) + in time (chronos). So, the fact that the original Greek word for understanding is synesis, points us towards its fundamental meaning.

You may remember that in the "Knowledge is Key" lesson, we gave a baseline explanation that knowledge is essentially the joining of two things together from a *subjective* point of view. In other words, you are joining that *information* to *yourself* - those are the two things coming together. Even when the Bible speaks of a man coming together with his wife, it uses a form of the word 'know' to describe their coming together. For example, in "Adam knew Eve his wife", that is speaking of coming together - but from a subjective perspective.

When we talk about *understanding*, it is also a coming together of two things, but from an *objective* perspective. Literally, the word 'synesis' in the Greek means to flow together. And that is what you are doing when you 'understand' - you are putting two things together, but in an objective sense. It is not necessarily joining something to yourself, but you are taking two things that are "out there" and if you can put them together, you will get the understanding. Keep that in mind as we will see that play out in different ways later in this lesson.

GET UNDERSTANDING

In our last lesson we looked at a few scriptures about Solomon. And I want to look a little further here because there is much we can learn from Solomon regarding the three principles that we have been studying - knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Many people have heard the account of Solomon as he was preparing to become king. It is often said that he prayed, asking God for wisdom, and that it pleased God that he asked for wisdom instead of riches and honor. So, God decided to bless him not only with the wisdom, but He also gave him long life, riches, and honor. But if we go back and read the scriptures for ourselves, we see something slightly different.

So, let's go to 1 Kings chapter 3 and read Solomon's prayer to God. What did he *actually* ask for? As we read, keep in mind the overall topic: the fear of the Lord, knowledge, wisdom, and in particular understanding. In 1 Kings chapter 3 starting in verse 5, we read:

1 Kings 3:5-9

⁵In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

⁶And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

⁷And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. ⁸And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

Note: And then here it is, this is what Solomon actually asked.

⁹Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

So, there we see - it is normally said that Solomon asked for wisdom, but what Solomon *really* asked for was **understanding** - and in particular, an understanding heart. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word used here for 'understanding', is שָׂמַיִם (*šāma*), which mostly appears in the Bible as 'hear' or 'hearken'. So, in other words Solomon was asking for a heart that can hear - a hearing heart, a discerning heart. A heart of understanding.

Continuing to verse 10, we read:

1 Kings 3:10-14

¹⁰And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

¹²Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

¹³ And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. ¹⁴ And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

As I said, many people recount this scripture as though Solomon asked for wisdom - even I myself have heard it that way over and over, that Solomon asked for wisdom and God gave him wisdom and more. But that is actually different than what we see here. What Solomon asked for was *understanding*... and God blessed him with those other things as well. He blessed him with a wise heart; He gave him wisdom in order to give him understanding. And if we continue on to chapter 4 verse 29, we can see this summed up:

1 Kings 4:29

²⁹ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

Hopefully we are starting to see this connection between understanding and the heart. And if we go to one more place in the Old Testament, we will see something interesting in the book of Job. Many of us know the story of Job - in his suffering he made complaints to his friends, and they answered him in various (unsatisfactory) ways. But then God finally responds to Job by asking him questions that no one could truly answer... one of which relates to the subject of this lesson. In Job chapter 38 verse 36 it says:

Job 38:36

³⁶ Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

We continue seeing this connection between wisdom and understanding, and this scripture is letting us know that understanding actually takes place in the heart.

HEAR THE PARABLES

We will now look at a few things from the New Testament that show the vital importance of understanding. Beginning in Matthew chapter 13, we will see some of the teachings of Jesus. For context, we are going to read quite a bit here, but I want us to pay close attention to the role that understanding plays in all of this. Many are already familiar with this scripture, but there may be something here that has been overlooked. So, in Matthew chapter 13 starting in verse 1, it says:

Matthew 13:1-11

¹ The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. ² And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; ⁴ And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: ⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

⁹ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁰ And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? ¹¹ He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

That last statement is worth noting. Often times people think that Jesus' use of parables was just to teach. But here we see that the parables were also given to keep the true meaning *hidden*. Yes, Jesus used parables in order to teach some – but also to keep the teaching hidden from those who it was not for. That was in verse 11 and continuing in verse 12...

Matthew 13:12-14

¹² *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

¹³ Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Note: Again, Jesus is telling them why He teaches in parables.

¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

If you remember when we read about Solomon asking for an understanding heart, we noted that the root of the original Hebrew word has to do with hearing. And here again we see the connection between hearing and understanding. Verse 15...

Matthew 13:15-19

¹⁵ For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Note: So, there we see it again. From the Old Testament to the New, there is a connection between understanding and the heart. Verse 16.

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

Note: So now He's going to explain the parable.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

Now we are beginning to see the importance of understanding. Many times when the parable of the Kingdom and the Sower is spoken of, it is explained as someone hearing the word, but they *don't believe* it, and then Satan comes... That part is usually connected to not believing. But what Jesus *actually* says here is that **Satan comes when a person hears the word and they do not understand**. Continuing in verse 19...

Matthew 13:19-23

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. ²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. ²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Note: And this next verse is the reason why it is important to understand...

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

In reading this, I can at least say for myself that when I would think of this parable in the past, I thought it was either - you *believe* what Jesus is teaching *or you don't*. But really, **the essential thing here is understanding**. Jesus is showing that the outcome of hearing the word *depends on the understanding* of it. For the one who *doesn't* understand it, the devil will come and pluck that word right out of their heart. But for the one who truly *does* understand it – it says that he **will** bring forth fruit. It's just a matter of *how much*.

HAVE YE UNDERSTOOD ALL THESE THINGS?

Earlier in this lesson we talked about understanding being the joining of two things together. And as we continue reading, we will look at the structure of the parables which Jesus taught. We will see the pattern of Him presenting two things - one being the Kingdom of Heaven, (which is truly what He is teaching about)... and the other being the parable or thing that He is likening the Kingdom to. The understanding comes if you are able to join the two together.

Too often, people will take these parables and 'teach' something other than what Jesus taught. For example, they may teach that the Parable of the Sower is about giving money - but what Jesus was actually teaching with that parable, is the Kingdom.

So, we already read the parable of the Sower and the Seed - and now continuing to verse 24, He says:

Matthew 13:24

²⁴ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

So, He is giving you the two things. The Kingdom of Heaven is like...this. He then elaborates on what '*this*' is. But it is up to you to be able to put both things together, so that you come to understand what the Kingdom of Heaven is actually about. If we keep reading now into verse 31, we'll see it again:

Matthew 13:31

³¹ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

Again, the two things are presented. Are you able to understand and put them together? Verse 33...

Matthew 13:33

³³ Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,
which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Here again are two things – we see the Kingdom of Heaven, and the parable that He is giving. And in verse 44 He is still going...

Matthew 13:44

⁴⁴ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Then in verse 47:

Matthew 13:47

⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

So, Jesus gives all of these parables or examples. And if you remember from the beginning, He said the reason that He was doing this, is so that the people who are meant to understand it, will understand it. And the ones who aren't supposed to get it – they won't get it. They won't be able to understand or put it together. And as He concludes all of that teaching, in verse 51 it says:

Matthew 13:51

⁵¹ Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

So, we clearly see the importance of understanding. We know all these teachings that Jesus gave, all these great parables. But understanding them is crucial. So, we will look at a few more things in the gospels and then wrap this lesson up. Going to John chapter 12, we will see Jesus again talking about the blindness that had come onto the people. Starting in verse 37, it says:

John 12:37-40

³⁷ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: ³⁸ That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Note: This comes from the great prophecy in Isaiah chapter 53, which foretells of Jesus and the suffering that He would endure. But let's pay close attention to the next prophecy, which is about the people...

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰ He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

So, there again we see the understanding of the heart.

ALONG THE WAY

So far in this lesson, we have looked at understanding from the perspective of "1 + 1" or putting two things together. But as mentioned in the Fear of the Lord Pt. 1 lesson, there is another aspect of understanding, which is... when we take the knowledge of God and apply wisdom to it (doing what is right), understanding comes along the way.

Going to Luke chapter 24, we have the account of what happened after Jesus had suffered, died and was raised. This was when the news was beginning to spread to the apostles about His resurrection. Starting in verse 13, we read about the disciples who were on road to Emmaus:

Luke 24:13-25

¹³ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. ¹⁷ And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

¹⁸ And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? ¹⁹ And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

²⁰ And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. ²¹ But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. ²² Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

²³ And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.²⁴ And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

²⁵ Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Before we continue, I just want to make a side note here. Jesus taught in another scripture that we are not to call our brothers fools (Matthew 5:22). And if we notice here in verse 25, Jesus addressed His disciples, saying "O fools". However, this does not contradict His other teaching. If we take a quick look, the Greek word for 'fool' here in Luke is ἀνόητοι (or *anoētos*), which has the root meaning of 'to not perceive with the mind, or have understanding'. But that *other* verse in Matthew uses the Greek word μωρός (or *mōros*) which would be similar to calling someone a moron.

So here Jesus is basically saying to His disciples 'Do you not understand?' He wasn't calling them morons... which would not be a good thing. Continuing to verse 26...

Luke 24:26-32

²⁶ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Note: So, that's another way of saying He made them understand the things that were in those scriptures.

²⁸ And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. ²⁹ But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. ³⁰ And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

³² And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

So, we have been noticing this whole connection between understanding and the heart. And here, even though it's not said specifically in the scripture, we *understand* that this is what happened. He opened the scriptures and gave them the understanding. And when they recounted it to each other, they said '*Did not **our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?***'

We will see it stated again if we continue on to verse 33:

Luke 24:33-45

³³ And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, ³⁴ Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. ³⁵ And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

³⁶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. ³⁷ But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. ³⁸ And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

⁴⁰ And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? ⁴² And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. ⁴³ And he took it, and did eat before them.

⁴⁴ And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

⁴⁵ Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

So, there it is.

All of that to get to verse 45. When Jesus came to His disciples after His crucifixion, they didn't understand what had happened. But now the risen Christ was with them... and what *He* found important to do along with fellowshiping and breaking bread... was to open their understanding of the scriptures. So hopefully from that, we can also see the importance of understanding.

Since that verse takes us almost to the end of the book, we will just continue reading through to the end.

Luke 24:46-53

⁴⁶ And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. ⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

⁵¹ And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: ⁵³ And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

So, with that, we will close out our theme of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding for now. We can see the importance of understanding - and specifically, the understanding of the scriptures. Without proper understanding, our belief will be a faulty belief. If we have the information but have the wrong understanding of it, are we actually believing the truth?

That is why we must understand the *truth* of the scriptures; we must understand the truth of God's will. And then those things that we don't fully understand but have the knowledge of - if we just apply wisdom and humbly do what we know is right... the Lord will provide the understanding along the way.

As always, the knowledge that we need is of God's will concerning our salvation. If you would like help in understanding His will, feel free to [contact us](#) as we all grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Daniel 12:10

¹⁰ Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.